



## Washington State Community Jobs:

### A Case Example of Statewide Transitional Jobs Efforts Serving TANF Recipients

#### History and Background:

In 1997 Washington State, under the leadership of Governor Gary Locke, began developing what is now the oldest and largest Transitional Jobs (TJ) program, called *Community Jobs (CJ)*, serving people participating in a state Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF). Under Locke's request, key state agencies involved with welfare reform worked closely to design and implement the *Community Jobs* program to meet the state's goals of helping women and men transition off of welfare and become self-sufficient while meeting federal work requirements. *Community Jobs* was designed and implemented as a best practice TJ program combining wage-paid, real-world work opportunities and training with intensive case management services leading to placement in unsubsidized employment for participants who had been unsuccessful in traditional job readiness activities.

Transitional Jobs, (TJ), is an employment strategy that combines short-term, wage-paid real work, skill development and supportive services to transition people who have a hard time getting and keeping a job into employment.

*Community Jobs* was based on the belief that wage-paid, real work experience is the building block to assist people in getting and keeping a job and movement up a career ladder. TANF recipients are likely to face multiple barriers to getting and keeping a job such as few skills, little or no work history, child care necessities, transportation challenges, and potentially mental and physical health challenges, a history of substance use, and criminal record. In Washington State, TANF recipients have averaged 8 or more barriers to employment – impeding most from finding, keeping and being successful in work through traditional job readiness activities.

#### Program Administration:

The Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) is the lead administering agency of Community Jobs working closely with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). As the lead agency administering the program, CTED is responsible for overall management at the state level. CTED oversees the implementation efforts of local contractors, monitoring their progress and authorizing performance-based payments in accordance with contracts negotiated. CTED also provides ongoing support and technical assistance to contractors, sponsoring workshops and conferences to strengthen the capacity of sites across the state. Employment Security Department, State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, and the Office of Financial Management in Washington State have been critical partners in the design and implementation of the program.

CTED contracts directly with providers across the state to deliver the program. The program began with 5 pilot sites in rural and urban areas across the state. Following promising results, the program grew statewide and today contracts through an RFP process with 17 sites, with 19 sub-contractors, mostly nonprofit organizations. TANF participants in the program work 20 - 30 hours per week in temporary, wage-paid positions at nonprofit organizations and public agencies. Participants may also be enrolled in

education activities for a minimum of 10 hours per week. In addition to work and education, case managers provide services to address employment barriers and to ensure participants gain access to services that will lead to unsubsidized employment.

*Community Jobs* program contractors manage the program in their area, establishing work sites and ensuring that participants receive the intensive supervision, training, and support services they need to prepare for unsubsidized employment. Contractors assemble and coordinate a team of local and regional partners that include a wide range of community-based organizations and stakeholders. All financial management for the program is handled by the contractors under the terms of their contracts with CTED. Contractors also establish mechanisms necessary for payroll administration, including review and submission of time sheets for CJ participants by work sites. Contractors are reimbursed directly by CTED for incurred expenses.

### **Impact of *Community Jobs* in Washington State:**

Since *Community Jobs* began in 1997, the rate of enrollments has continued to increase annually, averaging 2,400 per year. In FY08-09 CTED expects to see its greatest number of enrollments, estimating to exceed 3000 enrollees by June 30, 2009. Quarterly analysis of *Community Jobs* enrollees' shows an average of 63 percent obtain unsubsidized employment. Wage data indicates the participants earn a median wage of \$8.85 per hour. The *Community Jobs* program is designed to meet federal TANF participation requirements, therefore providing Washington State with a full time countable work activity option to those receiving TANF.

### **Response To The Deficit Reduction Act:**

The passage of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) changed the structure of the work requirements mandated in the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. Under the DRA, states must have 50 percent of adults receiving TANF assistance and 90 percent of two-parent households receiving assistance in a set of activities defined in the law for a set number of hours. The passage of DRA gave authority to the Department of Health and Human Services to establish specific definitions of allowable work and education activities. As a result of the change in allowable activities, the *Community Jobs* program adjusted the program participation requirements, now requiring all participants to attend education/training classes or work up to 30 hours per week. Through partnership efforts with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges we continue to work together to meet the increased need for education components.